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ABSTRACT

The three experiments reported in this document are all concerned with high school students' use of Black English. For the first experiment, the hypothesis was that lessons in grammar would aid speakers of Black English in developing competence in standard English. Results of this experiment were inconclusive. The second experiment showed that elementary school children who speak nonstandard English read texts in standard English as well as they read texts in their own dialect and that their oral reading errors are as often translations from nonstandard into standard as vice versa. The third experiment showed that black children use more Black English forms in retelling exciting stories than in retelling academic material. The audience to whom they told the stories also affected the standardness of their speech, but girls and boys did not differ in this respect. Tables of findings and a list of references are included. (Author/JM)

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BLACK NONSTANDARD ENGLISH IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Jane W. Torrey

Studies on Developing Competence in Standard English II

This investigation was supported by

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National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

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Connecticut College
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Abstract

Learning another dialect of one's own language is a special case of language learning. It differs from the learning of another language in several ways, including the fact that the learner does not always automatically recognize the difference between the two dialects. The hypothesis being tested here was that lessons in some simple contrastive analysis of differences between Standard English and Black English would help speakers of the latter improve their skill in using the former. The results were inconclusive regarding that hypothesis.

Data are reported concerning the use of Standard English by the black and white high school students who served as subjects both in spontaneous speech and in a variety of other oral and written tests of English usage. The measures themselves were compared for difficulty and correlation with one another. The use of various forms of negatives is reported as well as some data on the attitudes of high school students toward Standard English.

A second experiment showed that elementary school children who speak nonstandard English read texts in Standard English as well as they read texts in their own dialect, and that their oral reading 'errors' are as often translations from nonstandard into standard as vice versa.

A third experiment showed that black children use more Black English forms in retelling exciting stories than in

retelling academic material. The audience to whom they told the stories also affected the standardness of their speech, but girls and boys did not differ in this respect.

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Black Nonstandard English in the High School

Experiment I: The Effect of Grammatical Knowledge on Developing Competence in Standard English

Introduction

The general hypothesis of the present study was that speakers of a nonstandard dialect would acquire more competence in the use of standard forms if their instruction provided a clear and simple knowledge of the grammatical differences between nonstandard and standard forms. If the instruction, on the other hand, consisted simply of rote drill in standard forms with no attempt to show the contrasting grammatical structures, then we supposed that there would be less gain in command of the standard forms. To measure competence in standard forms, we examined spontaneous speech as well as a variety of oral and written language exercises similar to ones commonly used in schools. These included written compositions, grammatical transformation exercises, filling in the grammatically standard form in a given sentence context, selecting the standard sentence to express the meaning shown in a picture and translating nonstandard sentences into Standard English. We expected that grammatical instruction would have different effects on different linguistic performances.

We selected for study two grammatical patterns characteristic of Black English which differed clearly from Standard English and which are stigmatized in their nonstandard forms. Black English is characterized by almost exclusive use of the "double negative" or "negative concord" rule in negative sentences that include indeterminates or certain adverbs. Black English also differs from Standard English in that the third person singular present tense verb inflection is frequently omitted in the former. In each case the standard form is generally considered to have higher

social status.

The design of our experiment involved three groups of subjects who used these particular Black English forms in their speech and in several of our tests. All individuals were interviewed and tested both before and after they were given one of three instructional programs on these grammatical forms. One program gave a systematic lesson in the use of the standard verb inflection using concrete examples and a minimum of technical grammatical terminology, but organized to show clearly the grammatical contrast between standard and nonstandard verb forms. A second program explained and illustrated the contrasting negative rules in a similar simple but systematic way. A control program gave nonsystematic or randomly ordered examples requiring the use of the standard verb and negative forms similar to the kinds of exercises commonly found in English workbooks and also similar in form and number to the response items in our systematic programs. Thus we could measure for each individual the difference between grammatical performance on a particular form before and after one of three learning experiences. The subjects' gain in competence on the standard verb inflection could be measured after a systematic program on that inflection, after a nonsystematic set of exercises including items on that inflection and after exposure to an unrelated program on the use of the standard negative rule. Gain in use of the standard negative could be compared after systematical instruction on that rule, after nonsystematic grammatical examples and after a (for them) irrelevant verb program. The nonsystematic control lesson contained items on both the negative and verb forms. It was roughly the same length as the systematic programs, but since it contained only items directly using the forms in question without the additional material that contributed the

grammatical explanation, it also gave the subjects as many actual chances to use the standard forms as did each of the systematic programs. Thus all groups experienced the same pattern of pretest-lesson-posttest and the control group made as many relevant responses as each experimental group on the particular form being tested.

Method

Subjects. Three ninth and tenth grade classes in 'Developmental English' at the New London (Connecticut) High School provided the subjects. 'Developmental English' is offered to students whose language competence is considered to need development. All the students in the three classes were interviewed and pretested to select those whose usages included the two nonstandard forms we were measuring. Twenty-one were selected whose use of both standard forms was lowest on the largest number of our tests and who also showed at least some spontaneous use of the nonstandard alternates. Of the 21, 15 were English-speaking black Americans, 3 were white and 3 were Puerto Ricans. The whites and Puerto Ricans use the double negative because it is a widespread nonstandard usage by no means confined to blacks. Their use of the zero verb inflection may be the consequence of considerable exposure to Black English. The 21 were divided into three groups, each containing 5 black students, 1 white and 1 Puerto Rican. The three groups were selected so as to be roughly equivalent in their initial use of both nonstandard forms. Each group received the same test treatment but a different intervening lesson in grammar.

Materials: Verb tests. Speakers of Black English frequently omit the third singular verb inflection, thus producing sentences like the following

He play a lot. My father say he want to get away.

However, there are few or none who consistently omit the inflection or who use it with plural subjects, so it is possible that many who use it

relatively seldom actually understand its grammatical meaning and are able to use it when they feel it is necessary. We therefore used a variety of tests to tap both active and passive competence at different levels of conscious control. Oral tests were administered and recorded on tape individually except as noted. Written tests were given as part of the classroom work except as noted. Two comparable forms of each measure were used in counterbalanced order as pretest and posttest.

A. Spontaneous usage

Each student was interviewed along with one other student from the same class and the conversation was recorded on a Uher 4000-L tape recorder. The interviewer asked about school and play activities, attempting to elicit as informal a style of speech as possible. Questions about regular activities were asked in order to elicit simple present tense forms. Written use was measured by asking for written composition on topics which seemed likely to generate present tense verbs. The compositions and tapes were searched for all instances of third person singular present tense verbs in which the inflection clearly was or was not used, and the score derived was the proportion of all such instances where the inflection occurred.

B. Context-cue test

Subjects were given sentences such as the following:

A singing bird is a bird that _____.

Roaring tigers are tigers that _____.

In the oral form the experimenter read the sentence ending without a falling intonation, so as to suggest that the subject add the proper word. The subject responded orally with the required verb. In the written form they were instructed to, "Fill in one missing word in each sentence."

Three singular and one plural verb were scored on a scale of 0 to 10 according to correctness in using the inflection and differentiating between singular and plural.

C. Time transformation

Subjects were shown a short typewritten story told in the past tense and instructed to "change the story to something that still happens all the time." About eight singular verbs were scored to find the proportion of those actually changed to present tense which were given the 's' inflection.

D. Number transformation

In the oral form of the number transformation test, the subjects were read aloud 10 sentences like the following:

At noon the sisters go to Dunkin Donuts.

At night my brothers go to the movies.

The instructions asked them to "change these sentences so that they tell about just one sister (or brother). In the written form a nine-line typed story was shown with instructions to "cross out every word that means there was more than one person doing it and write it over so there is only one." Responses were scored only if the student actually changed the subject to singular and used a present tense verb. The score was the proportion of these verbs which were given with the 's' ending.

E. Story corrections

A 13-line typewritten story, modified from a narrative recorded from an 8 year old speaker of Black English, was given to subjects with the instructions, "A boy told this story. He told it in everyday colloquial English. Cross out every word that isn't in formal business English and

write in the formal way to say the same thing." (The use of the terms 'everyday colloquial' and 'formal business' English were selected in consultation with the teacher, who also introduced them in class work.) Most of the present tense verbs lacked the inflection. The subject's score was the number of these verbs that were corrected to add the 's', provided the ending was still appropriate after other changes had been made in the sentence.

F. Word Choices

A common English lesson consists of sentences like the following:

Martha (like, likes) chocolate,

but her brothers always (want, wants) vanila.

Our word choices test contained four such choices of which three required singular and one a plural verb. The test was scored on a scale of 0 to 10 according to correctness in choosing the inflected form and differentiating between singular and plural.

G. Picture-Meaning Test

To test passive comprehension of the verb inflection it is necessary to have minimal pairs, sentences that are identical except for the presence or absence of the inflection, but which have different meanings. The difference in meaning, furthermore, must be able to be clearly represented in nonverbal form, such as by a picture. The verb inflection has, in fact, three distinct 'meanings': third person, singular, and present tense. The tense meaning is more likely to be understood than the number meaning. Torrey (1971) found that black children who used the inflection inconsistently could distinguish between pictures representing

She puts a picture up. and She put a picture up.

much better than they could distinguish between singular and plural use

of the inflection. It is difficult to find minimal pairs to test the singular meaning since any such pairs must also have singular and plural subjects, and these will nearly always differ in the noun inflection. Minimal pairs can only be found using nouns that are identical in singular and plural, such as deer, fish and sheep. The sentences

The sheep runs. and The sheep run.

can be matched with pictures showing one sheep or two sheep, respectively. Three such items representing the three allomorphs of the inflection comprised each subtest. The tests were patterned after those of Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1963) testing 'comprehension', or ability to select the correct picture to match someone else's sentence, and 'production', or ability to produce the correct sentence form to match a given picture. We also tested reading comprehension, the ability to match printed sentences to the correct pictures, and written production, the ability to write the correct sentence under each picture. The score was the proportion of scorable responses that conformed to Standard English for each type of response.

After the written production test, one pair of the test pictures was used to test explicit grammatical knowledge. The pictures with their typed captions in the correct places were shown. The 's' inflection was typed in red. The experimenter asked, "Can you tell me why does the one with the red 's' go with this (singular) picture?" Subjects who answered, "Because there is only one sheep" were scored correct. Those who rejected the match and said the one with the 's' went with the plural picture were scored incorrect.

Materials: Negative Tests. Speakers of Black English rarely deviate from the negative concord rule (Labov, 1972a) or 'double negative' in those negative sentences which contain indeterminates or certain adverbs. Oral and written tests were again used to assess active and passive competence with the Standard English rules of negation for such sentences.

A. Spontaneous usage

The same interviews that assessed verb inflection use were searched for standard and nonstandard negative uses. Written compositions on topics likely to elicit double negatives were also obtained. Scores represented the proportion of standard negatives used out of the total number of sentences that could have shown negative concord, that is, that contained indeterminates or adverbs that have negative forms.

B. Opposite transformation

One method of eliciting negative sentences was to ask subjects to produce sentences that "mean the opposite" of a given sentence, such as:

I can pick some flowers there.

Anybody can read this.

In the oral form the experimenter read the stimulus sentence and recorded the oral response. In the written form the subject read a positive sentence on one side of the page and filled in blanks to form a negative sentence beside it, for example:

I can find some animals there.

I _____ find _____ animals there.

Responses were scored only if they took the expected form with a double negative or with the Standard English equivalent. The proportion of standard negatives out of this total was the reported score.

C. Sentence and story corrections

Sentences containing double negatives were read to the subject with the instruction to "tell me how it would be in formal business English." In the written form a list of typed sentences was given with the instruction, "If you find something that is colloquial, cross it out and write it over in formal business English." Sentences like the following were included:

Mary can't hardly make nobody laugh.

I don't never want no trouble.

In addition the same typewritten story used to measure corrections of verb inflections was scored for correction of its double negatives. In all corrections tests responses were scored only if they were, in fact, translations of the same meaning into Standard English negatives. The proportion of negative usages changed into standard form out of the total either changed correctly or left in nonstandard form was the score.

D. Word choices

The same test used to assess the verb inflection contained items that tested the negative, for example:

Tom won't (never, ever) have enough time.

Nobody (can, can't) do that.

The score was the proportion of examples in which the word selected made the sentence Standard English.

Results

A comparison of pre- and posttest scores on oral tests of the verb inflection and negative for subjects who received systematic training programs on those two usages respectively showed no differences that

might support the hypothesis. This was true whether all subjects or only black subjects were considered. Differences were also insignificant for the control groups. The written posttests were not completed by enough subjects to make any comparisons.

Discussion

The design of the experiment on the effect of grammatical knowledge essentially proved not to be feasible. Although the classroom setting of the procedures seemed necessary to justify them to the student 'subjects' and also to enhance generalizability for educational purposes, it also created schedule problems which led to a postponement of the essential written posttesting until months after the training procedure and also to our failure even to obtain many of the key tests. The classroom setting also made it impossible to be sure in individual cases that the tests were the work of the person whose name appeared on the paper, since much copying and mutual helping was characteristic of the classroom. With a small number of subjects, we could not afford the resultant errors.

It seems likely also that the training programs themselves were too short. They were carried out individually in two sessions. Previous attempts to teach the use of the verb inflection to younger children had shown it to be a difficult task. In one experiment (Torrey, 1972), involving only one short training session, second graders made no progress at all. In the second (Torrey & Silverman, 1971), which provided four sessions on four different days, there was significant improvement in use and understanding of the inflection for children entering the second grade.

It is possible that despite their more advanced age, developmental English students in junior high school also need more time to absorb this rather subtle grammatical form at an intellectual level.

Discussion: Comparisons of language use between groups

Tables 1 and 2 show the mean scores for three subgroups of students on oral and on written tests of the standard verb inflection, which were given to substantially all the developmental English students. Whites scored significantly more standard on all of the oral and most of the written tests. Although numbers of Puerto Ricans are very small, their results were more similar to the black scores than to the white ones on oral tests and on most written tests. On all tests where blacks and whites differed significantly, Puerto Rican averages were between the two, but significantly different from whites only in composition and the picture-meaning tests.

The explicit grammatical knowledge of blacks and whites was compared on the written picture-meaning test by considering the proportion of each group that answered correctly when asked directly why the caption with the verb 's' went with the singular version of the picture. Table 3 shows that 40% of the 20 black students and 71% of the 21 white students answered correctly. All those scored incorrect thought the verb 's' should go with the plural picture. The difference between these proportions is significant at the .01 level of confidence. It is interesting to compare these proportions for black and white tenth graders in developmental English with the results for the same kind of test given to white students in a predominantly white and middle class school, also in New London. There 60% of the white second-graders answered the same

Table 1

Group Comparisons

Mean Scores on Oral Tests of Verb Inflection

		Speech	Context Cue	Number Transformation	Picture-Meaning Comprehension	Picture-Meaning Production	Mean Oral Tests
Black	Mean	.64	.67	.62	.23	.25	.49
	N	21*	23	23	23	23	23
White	Mean	.98	.93	.90	.57	.55	.77
	N	21	23	21	23	23	23
Puerto Rican	Mean	.63	.52	.60	.17	.13	.40
	N	6	6	6	6	6	6
Black v. White	t	5.04	3.26	3.38	3.13	3.05	4.58
	p<	.001	.01	.01	.01	.01	.001
Black v. Puerto Rican	t	.09	1.06	.18	.41	1.04	.83
	p<						
White v. Puerto Rican	t	4.35	3.42	2.77	2.19	2.64	3.72
	p<	.001	.01	.02	.05	.02	.001

* The subscripted numbers represent the N for each mean.

Table 2

Group Comparisons

Mean Scores on Written Tests of Verb Inflection

		Composition	Context Cue	Transformations Time	Transformations Number	Story Correction	Word Choice	Picture-Meaning Reading	Picture-Meaning Writing	Mean Written
Black	Mean	$\underline{.48}_{15}$*	$\underline{.18}_{22}$	$\underline{.50}_{19}$	$\underline{.09}_{22}$	$\underline{.50}_{22}$	$\underline{.41}_{22}$	$\underline{.28}_{24}$	$\underline{.33}_{22}$	$\underline{.35}_{24}$
	N									
White	Mean	$\underline{.92}_{12}$	$\underline{.67}_{23}$	$\underline{.73}_{19}$	$\underline{.57}_{19}$	$\underline{.59}_{20}$	$\underline{.54}_{23}$	$\underline{.72}_{23}$	$\underline{.68}_{22}$	$\underline{.67}_{25}$
	N									
Puerto Rican	Mean	$\underline{.54}_{4}$	$\underline{.32}_{6}$	$\underline{.71}_{3}$	$\underline{.25}_{6}$	$\underline{.41}_{6}$	$\underline{.57}_{6}$	$\underline{.11}_{6}$	$\underline{.06}_{6}$	$\underline{.35}_{6}$
	N									
Black v. White	t	3.86	4.22	2.06	4.62	.79	1.58	3.84	2.79	4.43
	p<	.001	.001	.05	.001			.001	.01	.001
Black v. Puerto Rican	t	.26	.83	.91	1.20	.46	1.38	.97	1.61	.02
	p<									
White v. Puerto Rican	t	2.86	1.84	.06	1.67	1.07	.18	3.90	3.58	3.52
	p<	.02						.001	.01	.01

* The subscripted numbers represent the N for each mean.

Table 3

Proportion of Correct Answers

On Test of Explicit Grammatical Knowledge

for Black, Puerto Rican and White Students

	Black	White	Puerto Rican
Correct	8	15	2
Incorrect	12	6	4
Proportion Correct	.40	.71	.33

test correctly and 83% of the fourth graders. Apparently age is not the only factor in this kind of grammatical knowledge.

Group differences for the negative, shown in Tables 4 and 5 for oral and written tests respectively, are much less clear. Although blacks are significantly less standard than whites in their average scores based on all tests taken, they differed on only four of the eight particular tests. Whites were significantly more likely to change double negatives to standard forms in both oral and written presentations and more likely to choose words to form a standard rather than a double negative. Whites were more standard than blacks in spontaneous speech and written composition, but differences were not significant. One reason for the lack of significance may be that the number of subjects who actually used scorable negatives was very small, but the observed differences in use of standard and nonstandard negatives in written composition was also very small.

Discussion: White versus black

It is clear that the frequency of omission of the Standard English verb inflection in speech is related to the individual's ability to respond in Standard English to a number of other verbal tasks of the kind frequently required in school. It is also related to ability to understand the inflection as a sign of number as measured by our picture-meaning tests. Both oral and written performances are related. Our white students, who used the inflection 98% of the time in speech and 92% in writing were compared with the black group, who averaged 64% in speech and 48% in writing. The differences between the group averages on the other tests are the basis of our assertion at this point that

Table 4

Group Comparisons

Mean Scores on Oral Tests of Negative Usage

		Spontaneous Speech	Opposite Transformation	Sentence Correction	Mean Oral Negative
Black		.42	.73	.43	.54
	N	19*	19	23	22
White		.61	.86	.70	.76
	N	10	20	23	20
Puerto Rican	Mean	.18	.88	.44	.48
	N	4	4	6	5
Black v. White	t	1.53	1.24	3.66	3.16
	p<			.01	.01
Black v. Puerto Rican	t	1.71	.81	.11	.50
	p<				
White v. Puerto Rican	t	2.00	.13	2.30	2.66
	p>	.05		.05	.02

* The subscripted numbers represent the N for each mean.

Table 5

Group Comparisons

Mean Scores on Written Tests of Negative Usage

		Composition	Opposite Trans-formation	Corrections Sentence	Corrections Story	Word Choice	Mean Negative
Black		.72	.59	.38	.50	.56	.53
	N	11*	22	20	22	22	23
White		.77	.68	.69	.51	.80	.70
	N	8	22	22	20	23	24
Puerto Rican	Mean	.75	.69	.35	.28	.57	.46
	N	2	4	6	6	6	6
Black v. White	t	.29	1.10	4.09	.03	2.68	2.64
	p<			.001		.02	.02
Black v. Puerto Rican	t	.10	.67	.31	1.40	.04	.76
	p<						
White v. Puerto Rican	t	.07	.03	2.75	1.46	1.95	2.33
	p<			.02		.05	.05

* The subscripted numbers represent the N for each mean.

these performances are interrelated. Data on intercorrelations are shown below.

White and black students showed less difference on the use of double negatives than on the verb. This was expected since the double negative is characteristic of nearly all nonstandard dialects of English, whereas the omission of the verb inflection is more peculiarly black. Labov (1972a) reports almost exclusive use of negative concord by his speakers of black vernacular, whereas our black subjects used 42% standard negatives in speech as compared with 61% for their white classmates. The fact that our subjects were interviewed in school as part of their English lessons could be expected to increase their use of standard forms, but our subjects probably also include some whose language is quite standard since they were not, like Labov's subjects, selected for their known membership in the 'vernacular culture'. Blacks and whites hardly differed in their use of standard negatives in written compositions, both using the negative concord only about one-fourth of the time.

Discussion: Test Comparisons

In understanding the pattern of performance on our various tests, two sociolinguistic facts seem relevant. One is the social status of the verb inflection and the negative concord rule in the minds of speakers and hearers. The double negative is what Labov calls a 'stereoptype' (1972b), that is, people are aware of its use and often consciously judge the status of a speaker accordingly. The verb inflection, on the other hand, is probably merely an indicator, a grammatical form

that is found differently in different cultural groups but is seldom noticed and thus not used as a criterion of status. It's meaning is only dimly recognized. (Our picture-meaning test of its meaning as a sign of singular number was difficult even for whites, who regularly use the inflection, and extremely difficult for blacks.)

The second social fact is that our black subjects, like most speakers of Black English, can be expected to be bi-dialectal, that is, they have some ability to shift dialects according to the social situation, using more standard forms in formal settings. However, shifting dialects should be easier when the forms of each dialect are consciously recognized, as in the case of the stereoptyped double negative, than for almost unnoticed forms like the verb inflection.

In addition to the social characteristics of language, two psycholinguistic dimensions of our tests should be considered. One is the extent to which a test requires conscious attention to grammatical differences. At one extreme we find the spontaneous and relatively informal speech of our interviews,where we would expect less self-conscious attention to the forms of language than in most of the other tests. Near the other extreme is our picture-meaning test of the verb inflection,where correct responses depend upon explicit attention to the inflection and where its precise meaning has to be understood. Our 'grammatical knowledge' question, "Why does the red 's' go with this picture?" asks for explicit knowledge of the rule in its most conscious form. In general, it seems likely that written tests require more conscious attention to details than oral tests since the performance of writing is less natural and more dependent upon school learning than is

speech. Our subjects were placed in developmental English classes largely on the basis of their difficulties with written work.

The other psychological dimension of interest is the active-passive one. Some of our tests require subjects to generate language of their own whereas others ask them to judge the correctness of language that is presented to them. It is possible that a bi-dialectal subject may generate the required standard form when asked to, but be willing to accept as correct nonstandard forms, such as are found in our sentence corrections test. Our word choices test, which provides both forms, would stand somewhere about the middle of the active-passive dimension. Tests in which blanks must be filled to complete a sentence would be less active than those in which the whole sentence had to be generated in the response. Thus in our context cue and opposite transformation tests, the oral form would be more active than the written form.

Putting the above background considerations together, it is possible to predict that our black subjects will give more standard responses in the oral tests of the verb inflection than in the written tests because the oral tests are generally more active and require less conscious attention to a form of which few are normally aware. Taking just those students who had scores on both members of any oral-written pair of tests, we calculated the values of the differences between the means. These means, shown in Table 6 are not exactly the same as the means shown in Tables 1 and 2 since the latter were for all subjects who took each individual test. The difference in mean scores on all oral and on all written tests for black subjects was significant at the .01 level of

confidence with higher scores for the oral versions. The differences for three of the individual tests which had comparable oral and written forms was also significant. For the picture-meaning tests, however, where both the oral and written forms required explicit attention to the grammatical form and its meaning, there was no significant difference between the two.

For the double negative, we could expect the effect of the written form to be different, since people are much more aware of this form and of its social value. Since writing is a more studied and more formal medium than speech, we could expect subjects to make use of their awareness of the form to decrease their use of it in writing. Only nine individuals, however, gave us at least two scorable negatives in both speech and writing, so the difference indicated in Table 6 was not shown to be significant. The difference for the oral and written opposite transformations was in the opposite direction, more standard in oral than in written form. Our subjects found this test extremely difficult, especially in its written form. Many responses were unscorable because they were not the opposite required or were not grammatical in any dialect.

The difference between active and passive performances of bi-dialectal subjects may account for certain other differences between these test scores. Considering only written tests, we can compare spontaneous composition, where subjects generated their own language, with the sentence correction test, where they first had to judge a sentence and change it only if they found it unacceptable. Considering only those black subjects who had scores on both tests, the mean proportionate

Table 6

Tests of Mean Differences

between Comparable Oral and Written Tests

for Black Subjects Only

	Oral	Written	t	N	p less than
Verb					
Spontaneous Speech Writing	.67	.33	2.71	16	.02
Context-cue	.66	.18	7.06	22	.001
Number Transformation	.62	.11	7.01	23	.001
Picture-meaning Comprehension & Reading	.23	.26	.59	23	
Production & Writing	.27	.30	.49	21	
Mean Verb Texts	.49	.32	3.60	23	.01
Negative					
Spontaneous Speech & Writing	.36	.68	1.88	9	
Opposite Transformation	.72	.59	1.88	22	
Sentence Correction	(.43)	(.38)	*		
Mean Negative Tests	(.54)	(.53)	*		

* Unpaired data, taken from Tables 4 and 5, were not tested statistically.

Table 7

Intercorrelations of Verb Inflection Tests*

	OCC	ONT	PC	PP	MO	WCo	WCC	TT	WNT	SC	WCh	PR	PW	MW
ORAL														
Spontaneous Speech	.53	.55	.39	.40	.70	---	.41	---	---	---	---	.38	.34	.39
Context-cue		.56	.47	.50	.76	.39	.43	---	---	---	---	.49	.34	.37
Number Transformation			.44	.46	.74	.63	.32	.36	---	---	---	.41	---	.38
Picture Comprehension				.85	.84	---	.41	---	.49	.30	---	.72	.64	.64
Picture Production					.65	---	.42	.39	.46	.37	---	.78	.71	.71
Mean Oral						.45	.49	.38	.39	---	---	.73	.60	.66
WRITTEN														
Composition							.41	.48	---	---	---	.39	---	.51
Context-cue								---	.70	.41	---	.49	.33	.70
Time Transformation									---	---	---	.56	.50	.59
Number Transformation										.54	.33	.63	.55	.82
Story Correction											.31	.47	.37	.68
Word Choice												---	---	.42
Picture Reading													.87	.87
Picture Writing														.81
Mean Written														

* Correlations are shown only where they were significant at the five percent level. Those underlined were also significant at the one per cent level.

Table 8

Intercorrelations of Negative Tests*

	OOT	OSC	MO	WCo	WOT	WSC	StC	WCh	MW
ORAL									
Spontaneous Speech	---	.35	.72	---	---	---	---	---	---
Opposite Transformation		.56	.82	---	---	---	---	---	---
Sentence Correction			.83	---	---	.63	.44	.43	.59
Mean Oral				---	.34	.56	.36	.40	.50
WRITTEN									
Composition					---	---	---	---	.43
Opposite Transformation						.43	.38	.38	.67
Sentence Corrections							.65	.62	.80
Story Correction								.63	.84
Word Choice									.79
Mean Written									

* Correlations are shown only where they were significant at the five percent level. Those underlined were also significant at the one percent level.

use of Standard English in spontaneous composition was .74 whereas the mean proportion of nonstandard sentences that were correctly changed to standard form was only .38. With an N of 11, the t value (2.66) is significant at the .05 level. It seems possible that even when speakers are able to standardize their own compositions, they are still unable to spot nonstandard usages that conform to their alternate rules of speech.

Discussion: Intercorrelations between tests

Tables 7 and 8 show the intercorrelations of various tests for the verb inflection and standard negative respectively. Each correlation is based upon the scores of all the students in developmental English for whom we had scores on both the two tests in question. The N's vary therefore. The correlation values shown are all those that were found to be significant at the five per cent level of confidence. Those also significant at the one per cent level are underlined. Insignificant correlations are omitted.

Verb inflection tests. Use of the verb inflection in spontaneous speech is correlated with all other oral measures of its use and with even the reading and writing forms of the picture-meaning tests. However, only one other written test has a significant correlation with spontaneous oral use. All of the oral tests are correlated with all other oral tests, but the same cannot be said for the written tests. Most of the nonsignificant intercorrelations of written tests involve the written composition and the word choice tests, both of which had very narrow variances, thus limiting the amount of correlation that was possible. These same tests also account for almost half of the nonsignificant correlations between oral and written tests.

Table 9 shows that the picture-meaning tests also relate to explicit grammatical knowledge. The proportion of correct statements of the grammatical reason for using the 's' ending is significantly and much higher for those with higher scores on the written picture-meaning test.

The fact that the picture-meaning tests intercorrelate closely with one another regardless of whether the performance is active or passive, oral or in writing, no doublt reflects the fact that the test always requires attention to the inflection and conscious understanding of its meaning with regard to number. More important is the fact that these tests are correlated with nearly all the other tests whether oral or written and account for all the correlations over .70 involving individual tests. This tends to support the general view that consistent use of a grammatical form is related to explicit grammatical knowledge. It does not, of course, tell whether grammatical awareness is easier to achieve for speakers who have a competence in using the form or whether having grammatical understanding causes the increase in competence to use it. The former seems like a plausible explanation, but the latter, which is also the basic hypothesis on which this experiment was based, is not incompatible with it. It seems likely that each kind of knowledge may enhance the other, though it is also obvious from other observations that explicit knowledge is not a necessary condition for competence in use.

Table 10 shows the results of giving the explicit grammatical knowledge test after instruction in which the verb inflection either was or was not explained. Those who had instruction on the verb with

Table 9

Proportion of Correct Answers

on Test of Explicit Grammatical Knowledge

for Subjects with Low and High Scores

on Written Picture-Meaning Tests

	Number Correct	
	Less than Two	Two or Higher
Correct	3	22
Incorrect	18	4
Proportion* Correct	.14	.85

*Difference between proportions significant at .01 level.

Table 10

Results of Test of Explicit Grammatical Knowledge

on Posttests after Verb and Other Instructional Programs

	Program	
	Verb (Relevant)	Control and Negative (Irrelevant)
Correct	4	4
Incorrect	3	13

explanation were more likely to answer correctly, but the numbers are too small to draw conclusions.

Negative tests. Among the tests of negative use, we find that four are most intercorrelated with one another and also related to most other tests. These are the oral and written forms of the sentence correction test, the story correction test and the word choices. The only oral test in this group is almost exactly like its corresponding written form. Three tests were relatively unrelated to the other tests in this set. The written composition produced relatively few scorable responses so that the numbers of subjects involved in the correlation and the range was restricted. This fact could account for its lack of correlation with other tests, and it would therefore not be safe to conclude that spontaneous written use of the double negative is unrelated to other performances on the negative. The opposite transformation test was very difficult and also had a narrow range. As for the oral use of the negative, we cannot account for its lack of significant correlations on grounds of numbers or range, since the latter was quite wide. A plausible hypothesis, consistent with the view that the negative is under relatively conscious control, is that variations in its spontaneous use are affected more by those social conditions that affect style and formality of speech than they are by relative grammatical competence with standard negative rules.

Discussion: Use of different types of negative sentences

There are a number of different kinds of sentences in which the negative concord rule can manifest itself. We included four different types in our tests and analyzed all our spontaneous productions for the frequency of uses of each. We found no spontaneous sentences that did not fit into one or another type. Table 11 lists the sentence types

Table 11

Types of Negative Sentences with Examples and Frequencies of Pretest Usage

	Spontaneous Speech	Written Composition	Story Correction
Post-Verb Indeterminate			
Standard			
He can't do anything.	20	15	82
He can do nothing.	11	11	1
Negative Concord			
He can't do nothing.	104	5	60
Hardly			
Standard			
I can hardly write.	0	0	9
Negative Concord			
I can't hardly write.	4	1	32
Subject Indeterminate			
Standard			
Nobody can catch'em.	14	9	4
Negative Concord			
Nobody can't catch'em	2	1	12
Never			
Standard			
I can never go there.	22	0	32
I can't ever go there.	0	0	21
Negative Concord			
I can't never go there.	9	0	25

and gives simple examples of each using both standard and negative concord rules. The first type, which is the most frequently used, involves an indeterminate coming after the verb. Standard English can handle the negative two ways, either by coupling not with the auxiliary or by incorporating the negative in the indeterminate. The negative concord rule inserts the negative in both places. Both standard forms are used, the former more often. The two standard forms are somewhat different semantically, and our story correction test evokes the first overwhelmingly. This is also the kind of sentence in which the negative concord rule is most frequently employed.

The second type of sentence involves the adverb hardly. Hardly is treated as containing a negative element, and therefore in Standard English no other negative is introduced in the sentence. According to the negative concord rule, the auxiliary must be coupled with not after hardly. We found very few spontaneous uses of hardly, all with negative verbs. In the corrections test, most of the negative verbs with hardly were accepted as correct.

Our third type of sentence has the indeterminate as subject coming before the verb. In Standard English no other negative is used, but strict negative concord would require a not with the auxiliary following. We found only three instances of negative concord in this type of sentence, two in speech (from Blacks) and one in writing (from a white). This is consistent with Labov's (1972a) report that transfer of a negative to a verb from a preceding indeterminate is much less frequent in the speech of his black subjects than transfer from verb to a

following indeterminate. He found no instances in white nonstandard speech.

The fourth type of sentence involves the adverb ever. In Standard English, the negative element can be incorporated either into the auxiliary or into the adverb, making it never. Negative concord uses negatives in both places. Most of our spontaneous instances were standard, all of these using never, but it is clear from the way our subjects correct the negative concord uses in the story test that they also command the alternative form of the standard.

The four types of negative sentences differ not only in their spontaneous frequency but also in the pattern of their use in our different measures. One way to consider these differences is to arrange our measures on a scale from active to passive language use, that is, from production of sentences or parts of sentences in speech or writing to judging the standardness of sentences presented in complete form. The data from spontaneous speech represent the most active end of the scale, followed by several tests in which sentences were produced by the subjects, but under more restrictive conditions. Written composition was included here, since writing is more difficult than speaking because it imposes problems of spelling as well as a more difficult style. Production was also asked for in the oral and written opposite transformation task. The subjects formed their own negative sentences, but were restricted to expressing the opposite of a given sentence.

At the passive end of the continuum subjects were given written sentences, separately or as part of a story, and asked to change them

into 'formal business English'. Separate sentences were also presented orally for the same kind of correction. Most of the errors in these tests consisted of failing to change nonstandard usages, so the tests became a measure of passive acceptance of nonstandard forms as opposed to active production. Some standard sentences were included among the separate sentences, and a possible error would be to change these into nonstandard forms. These latter changes were scored separately.

Midway between active production and passive judgment was the 'word choice' test in which one of the two words had to be selected to complete a sentence. One choice produced a standard negative, the other, negative concord.

Table 12 shows the proportions of standard responses for all types of tests by black and white subjects separately for the four types of negative sentences. The group comparisons reflect the fact already reported that whites are significantly more standard than blacks in use of these negatives. It is also worth noting that the patterns of performance on the different tests within each sentence type are almost the same for the two racial groups.

The location of the indeterminate before or after the verb makes a clear difference in the relative standardness of spontaneous speech and the more structured tests. The post-verb indeterminate usually conforms to the negative concord rule for the blacks and almost half the time for whites, whereas the verb is usually standard (without not) following a negative indeterminate for both groups. For the more structured production tests and for word choices, however, the two

Table 12

Proportions of Standard Usage

in Four Types of Negative Sentences

	Black	White	0 20 40 60 80 100
Post-Verb Indeterminate			
Spontaneous Speech	15	52	
Other Produced Sentences	84	97	
Word Choice	69	88	
Non-standard Corrected	55	68	
Hardly			
Spontaneous Speech (3,1)*	(0)	(0)	
Other Produced Sentences	18	35	
Word Choice	40	61	
Non-standard Corrected	20	35	
Subject Indeterminate			
Spontaneous Speech (13,3)*	85	(100)	
Other Produced Sentences	85	90	
Word Choice	60	83	
Non-standard Corrected	34	62	
Never			
Spontaneous Speech	67	86	
Other Produced Sentences	--	--	
Word Choice	30	83	
Non-standard Corrected	52	78	

* Number of sentences of each type spontaneously spoken by black and white subjects respectively. Proportions based on fewer than 5 are shown in parenthesis.

locations of the indeterminate make little difference in the frequency of standard usage. Despite the fact that our subjects use the negative concord rule most often for post-verb indeterminates, they are equally able to use the standard rule in a more formal test and, in fact, are more likely to correct nonstandard usages in the passive correction test. The verb following a negative indeterminate is more often left in nonstandard form by black subjects, although they use the standard form overwhelmingly in their spontaneous speech. It is clear that proportion of standard usages in spontaneous speech, even in a school setting, does not correlate exactly with ability to give standard responses on tests or to recognize nonstandardisms in other people's language.

Our data on the spontaneous use of hardly are insufficient for any conclusions, but the few instances were with negative verbs and it was the teacher's impression that negative verbs were normally used with hardly by these students. Our other tests also indicate that their hardly sentences normally include a negative verb. On the word choice tests only the whites gave more than half standard responses for these sentences. The profile of negative concord use across different kinds of tests is similar to that for post-verb indeterminates in that spontaneous speech is apparently less standard than test performance, although the frequency of standard usage is much lower for all subjects on all measures.

The pattern for sentences with ever is more like that for pre-verb indeterminates in that spontaneous usage is more standard than word choices or passive judgments, especially for blacks. There were

no other production tests of this kind of sentence.

It is clear from these results that the use of negative concord as opposed to the standard negative rule varies with the kind of sentence and the performance required as well as with the dialect of the speaker. Our black subjects are clearly bi-dialectal for most types of sentences. They can produce sentences in the standard form in a test situation, but they have considerable tolerance for nonstandard forms even in written form in that they often fail to correct them even when instructed to change the material to "formal business English". Whites are more standard than blacks in all these respects.

As for sentences with hardly, the use of negative concord is much more usual with all subjects. It seems possible that the language itself is changing in this case, so that can't hardly is approaching the status of standard usage. Data from more consistently standard speakers would be necessary to confirm this hypothesis.

The pedagogical implications of these findings may be that the task of 'teaching Standard English to speakers of nonstandard dialects' is not primarily one of explicit instruction in standard grammar. Our subjects already have considerable command of the standard rules at the level of controlled tests. Rather, if students are to be made more competent in Standard English, they may need to become more aware of the contrast between the two usages, both of which they know, and perhaps to have instruction in the appropriate situations for using them. Drills that would give better control over style shifting would be required. The contrast between their present production of post-verb

indeterminate negatives in speech and in writing, as shown in Table 11, shows that they already shift to more frequent standard usage in writing, but the number of nonstandard uses even in writing and especially their acceptance in the story corrections test, both situations where the instructions called for "formal business English", suggest that further training is necessary before they will be able to handle Standard English negatives consistently.

Discussion: Attitudes

If the goal of providing students with the ability to use Standard English in appropriate situations is to be achieved, there are several kinds of knowledge that must be imparted. First, of course, competence in the standard language itself is required. It is understood that such competence normally includes ability to speak in various styles, since most speakers have competence in more than one dialect, or register. Second, it is necessary to know which forms belong to which dialect or style. Obviously this knowledge need not be in the form of explicit rules, but at some level there must be an ability to discriminate between the dialects in order to select which forms to use. Third, it is necessary to know which situations are appropriate for which dialect. Finally, for purposes of learning to become more bi-dialectal, it is necessary to have some motivation, an attitude toward the standard dialect that disposes one to want to learn it or use it.

In view of the general lack of interest in the subject of grammar which is characteristic not only of substandard speakers, but of most educated standard speakers as well, it is difficult even to bring

people's attention to the subject-matter of language (the first kind of knowledge mentioned above), let alone persuade them to put effort into learning Standard English. It may be particularly true of school children who are still several years away from adult occupations. In the course of our work with students in seventh through tenth grades, in New London, we have kept a record of all discussions of language use and have made every effort to encourage such discussion in order to get information about how students might be motivated to learn and also to find out what they needed to learn.

It was clear from our observations, that these students had very little knowledge of or interest in the study of language, but that insofar as they were aware of it, they took a very conventional academic view of language difference. Unlike linguists, they regarded one dialect of English as definitely 'more equal' than the others. They used words like "proper" and "conservative", in describing standard forms and words like "mistake", "unproper", "slang" and "wrong" in describing nonstandard. Occasionally they described the standard language as "making more sense" or "sounding right", but there was often ambiguity about which dialect they were talking about when they used these terms. It was as though they thought the standard forms <u>ought</u> to make more sense and sound better, but often slipped into describing their everyday talk this way.

They were generally able to identify some kinds of people who use each type of language. English teachers, educated people and officials were expected to use Standard English, and there was some expectation that they would actually fail to understand nonstandard forms. Users

of nonstandard were "ordinary people", "regular people", "little kids", and "drop-outs". Situations where Standard English should be used were identified as talking to grown-ups or guests in the house or English teachers, and applying for jobs or official favors. Ordinary language was for use with friends, outdoors, at home and "when you get mad".

Attitudes toward Standard English were ambivalent. For example, one student said of a story written in nonstandard English, "If we keep reading stuff like this,we're going to have garbage in our brain". However, in the same conversation someone said, "It's a cool story the way it sounds," and "A regular person talks like that .... instead of, like, the proper."

Attitudes like these create a problem for the linguistically inclined teacher who would like to recognize the value of nonstandard forms and avoid the impression of treating the students' own language as unworthy, but perhaps more serious is the all but universal lack of any kind of awareness of or interest in the differences between standard and nonstandard forms especially at the level of competent use. Only a few stereotypes like "ain't" are commonly noticed. Students who were asked to compare paragraphs written in standard and nonstandard language often failed to notice double negatives or verb inflections in writing and used the nonstandard forms in their own discussion, even while asserting that such usages were wrong or didn't make sense. Those relatively few students who had some idea of style differences were a step ahead of most even though their attitudes toward them were linguistically naive.

The dilemma for the teacher is that the easiest way to make students aware of the differences in question is to enlist their existing prejudices about 'proper' English, yet insofar as that is done, the differences are treated as deficiencies. Two escapes from the dilemma suggest themselves. One is to make knowledge of language as such a part of the education of every child, divorcing the teaching of grammar from the notion that its main purpose is to improve one's language or writing and conveying a more scientific attitude that language is a subject worthy of study for its own sake in all its richness and variation. The art and sociology of nonstandard dialects would have to be part of such a curriculum. Presumably its students would have the necessary background to be taught something about dialect switching. At the moment such a curriculum sounds more like a linguist's dream come true than a presently feasible program for teaching. Another, perhaps more realistic approach to the problem, might be through a greater emphasis on oral language training in a context of drama and public speaking. Drama gives the opportunity for dialect practice in a "natural" context without the necessity of explicit intellectual training in the nature of language. Assuming that most people have an implicit recognition of the differences in question and some practical knowledge of when each kind should be used, they could be given exercise in standard usages and in switching styles in the context of playing roles or making speeches. Dramatic and oratorical skills have more obvious interest and potential value to the ordinary person than abstract grammar. Such an approach is consistent with the finding that explicit grammatical knowledge is only

indirectly related to language competence. However, it is also an anti-intellectual view from the point of view of linguistic science. The present experiment was designed on the opposite assumption, that is, that explicit knowledge of language differences would have a positive effect. It is not possible to conclude at this time whether the problems of background knowledge and motivation which contributed to our inability to get a clear test of the hypothesis are inherent and inevitable in any language-learning situation or whether our design might be feasible in some other realistic educational setting. Either way it seems likely that the oral role-playing approach would be a useful alternative technique if only because it would give the instruction a realistic and practical context, something which is probably necessary whether or not abstract knowledge is also imparted.

Experiment II

Reading Accuracy as a Function of the Dialect of Reader and Text*

Introduction

A number of studies (UNESCO, 1953; Lin, 1965; Carrol, 1969; Tax and Thomas, 1969) have concluded that reading instruction is facilitated when the learner's native tongue is used as the language of instruction. Stewart (1969) has prepared reading materials in black nonstandard English, and his observations suggest that reading materials in the learner's nonstandard dialect might facilitate the acquisition of reading skills for the nonstandard speaker. Dillard (1972) also contends that familiarity with the syntax of one's own dialect enables one to 'predict' what is to come before it is visible or audible. The nonstandard speaker in reading a Standard English text would be apt to misread it according to his own pattern of prediction. If the text is in the reader's nonstandard dialect, however, Dillard feels that the correspondence between the reader's pattern of prediction and the syntax of the text would be greater, thus facilitating the reader's acquisition of associations between words on the printed page and his spoken language.

While it is very plausible that reading materials in the dialect of the learner would facilitate the acquisition of reading skills, there has been little experimental evidence which supports the idea. Serwer (1969) reports the results of an experimental approach to reading instruction in New York City which utilized reading materials

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*The study reported here was done by John B. Davey, research assistant under the grant, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

constructed from samples of the learners' speech. This method did not, however, produce mean reading achievement test scores which were significantly different from the score obtained for students who were provided with reading instruction and materials of the conventional type. Goodman and Burke (1970) observed that nonstandard dialect speakers showed a tendency to change the syntax of Standard English reading material when reading it aloud so that the syntax of the material became acceptable in their own dialect. In a study by Davey (1971), students read a story in Standard English and were asked to retell it in their own words. The transcript of their retelling was subsequently read aloud by the students. It was observed that reading accuracy was better when the students read materials in their own dialect than when they read the story in Standard English. In Davey's study, however, the vocabulary of the standard dialect story was more elaborate than that of the students' stories, so that this difference may have contributed to the results.

The present study is an attempt to determine the effect of dialect of reading material on reading accuracy for otherwise comparable material. The hypothesis is that oral reading will be more accurate when the material is in the reader's dialect and when it is also familiar to the reader in vocabulary and content.

Method

Subjects: Thirty-five children between the ages of 7 and 13 years and attending grades 2 through 7 served as subjects. Twenty-nine were black and six were white, all members of the B.P. Learned Mission in New London, Connecticut, and all attending New London public schools.

Membership in the mission and the neighborhood where it is located is predominantly but not exclusively black.

Procedure: The experiment took two sessions. In the first session the experimenter, a familiar figure in the mission, offered each child a dime to participate and tried to put him or her at ease. The child was asked to relate a favorite story, the plot of a television show or something about family and friends. The story was recorded on tape and transcribed.

In the second session, the same child was asked to read aloud from one of several transcripts of these stories. A transcript of the individual's own story had been made using conventional spelling and inserting a few words to make sentences out of eliptical forms and supply needed connections. In scoring the accuracy of reading these inserted words were not counted. To provide a comparable story in Standard English, this same story was grammatically standardized. Table 13 lists the kinds of changes made to produce these standardized stories. The following is a sample paragraph from a nonstandard story and the standardized version:

Original Story

"She fight and every time she call people ugly. She's in our classroom. My baby brother play with me, and he fight. I don't like Roger. He ugly."

Standardized Story

"She fights and every time she calls people ugly. She's in our classroom. My baby brother plays with me, and he fights. I don't like Roger. He's ugly."

Table 13

Grammatical Forms Changed

to Produce Standardized Stories

Grammatical Description		Standard	Nonstandard
1.	Third person singular present tense verb inflection	Bill plays...	Bill play...
2.	Tense	(Consistent with context)	(Inconsistent with context)
3.	Copula "is"	He's the best. He plays.	He the best. He's plays.
4.	Invariant "be"	He is outside.	He be outside.
5.	"Ain't"	He isn't here.	He ain't here.
6.	Plural Nouns	Two dogs	Two dog
7.	Negative with an indefinite	I don't have any brothers.	I don't have no brothers.
8.	Non-existent forms	Cathy ran home. The men	Cathy ranned home. The mens

Five subjects told stories that were completely standard. These were eliminated from the study.

Two additional stories were obtained by matching each subject with another on the basis of age, grade, general length of narrative and proportion of standard grammatical features in it. Where exact matches were impossible, the most similar other subject was used. Each member of the pair read two versions of his or her own story and two versions of the matched member's story. To establish the degree of standardness, the story was examined for three usages which differ in Standard English and black nonstandard dialect:

1) the use of the third person singular present-tense verb
2) the use of the negative with an indeterminate
3) the use of the copula "is"

The proportion of standardness was the percent of the total number of times these forms occurred in which the standard version was used rather than the nonstandard.

A period of from one to two weeks elapsed between the first and second session. In the second, the subject was asked to read aloud into the tape recorder four stories that had been prepared:

1) the individual's own story
2) the standardized version of that story
3) the story told by the matched subject
4) the standardized version of the matched subject's story

The length of all texts was limited to not more than 150 words to control for the amount of time. The order of presentation was

varied to control for practice and order effects. Four subjects were dropped because they could not read the stories. Each subject received another dime for the second session.

Scoring: Any deviation from the text was considered an error. A word omitted, inserted or changed was considered one error. A dialect-based error was any change from a standard form to a nonstandard form or from nonstandard to standard, considering only the forms mentioned on Table 13.

Results

Table 14 shows the mean numbers of errors for each of the four stories. Error counts were the same for the nonstandard and the standardized versions of both stories, showing no effect of dialect. However, subjects read both versions of their own story significantly more accurately than the corresponding story of the matched subject. Familiarity of content and vocabulary, therefore, made reading easier.

It had been expected, judging by the Goodman and Burke (1970) study, that there would be more errors in which a standard form was changed to a nonstandard one than vice versa, but the findings did not confirm this prediction. Many conversions were made in both directions. Subjects were divided into two groups according to the direction of the majority of their changes, eliminating those who changed equally often in both directions. The mean proportions of standard usage in the original stories for members of the two groups were not significantly different, 61% for the group that made more changes from standard to nonstandard and, 65% for the other group.

Table 14

Mean Number of Errors per Twenty Words for Each Text Read

	Ss' Own Story	Matched Ss' Story	t of row difference
Original (Nonstandard) Story	1.69	2.24	2.29*
Standardized Version	1.70	2.36	4.13**
t of column difference	0.71	0.40	

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

If differences between the speaker's dialect and the language being read produce a difficulty in reading, it is possible that there is a correlation between standardness of speech and accuracy of reading the standardized stories. Table 15 shows the correlations between standardness of one's own story and number of reading errors of all kinds for the four stories separately. All the correlations are significant and negative, but those involving stories in the subject's own dialect are higher than for the standardized stories.

Discussion

The hypothesis that speakers of nonstandard English have a misleading set of expectations about language that make it more difficult for them to read material in Standard English has found little support in these results. Material in their own dialect proved no easier for our subjects to read than standard material, and their errors in oral reading suggested that they had no particular bias in the direction of 'their own' dialect, that, in fact, they were equally ready and able to translate into Standard English material that was already in their dialect.

The finding that individuals whose own language was more like Standard English were better readers of any materials, might suggest that reading ability was correlated with standard speech, a conclusion which would be hard to reconcile with the usual assumption that languages and dialects are purely cultural products. A more plausible account of this correlation, however, can be derived from the apparent bi-dialectalism of these subjects together with the hypothesis that their speech and their reading are both affected by their perception of the social situation. The finding that these children read equally

Table 15

Correlation between Ss' Proportion of Standard Usage
in Ss' Original Telling of Own Story
and Number of Errors per Twenty Words in Reading Typed Texts

S's Own Story	r
Original (Nonstandard)	-.65*
Standardized Version	-.50*
Matched S's Story	
Original (Nonstandard)	-.55*
Standardized Version	-.41**

*p<.01
**p<.05

well in two dialect patterns and translate equally often into either one in their reading errors, shows that they have some command of both sets of forms. This is also confirmed by the fact, that, like most speakers of nonstandard dialects, they used both kinds of forms interchangeably in their own speech. Since bilingual and bi-dialectal speakers have been observed to change languages in response to the social situation, it follows that their speech in any one situation is not a reliable measure of their language in general. It is characteristic that speakers use their more nonstandard dialects in situations where they feel relaxed and informal, and it seems possible that in these situations they might not be putting forth their greatest effort to be exactly correct in oral reading. Children who were less well acquainted with the experimenter or who felt challenged by the experimental situation would be likely to use their most formal language and also to take greater care with the accuracy of their performance. Thus differences in social motivation among subjects might account for the correlation between these two particular measures of language performance.

The practical implications of these results taken together are primarily negative, that is, there is nothing here to suggest that in the case of bi-dialectal speakers the use of one or the other of their dialects for reading materials would affect their ability to learn to read.

Experiment III

Dialect Use as a Function of Subject-Matter, Audience and Sex*

Introduction

Developing competence in the use of Standard English by speakers of Black English requires a recognition of two important facts about these speakers: one, that they are probably all bi-dialectal to some extent and therefore already have some command of the standard forms; and, two, that they commonly use more and less standard language according to the situation. It follows that it would be worthwhile to know more about the conditions that determine dialect switching. This would make it possible to design learning situations that would capitalize upon existing dispositions toward Standard English as well as to provide realistic instruction about situations where it would be needed.

Research has indicated at least two different conditions relevant to dialect switching: the kind of audience, and the subject-matter being discussed. Labov (1969) found that Harlem young people used more standard forms when they were talking alone with a single adult than when they were interviewed in pairs so that a friend was present. Blom and Gumperz (1972) report that Norwegians shift from local to standard dialects in response to the kind of people who are present, among other factors. The latter study also reports that the topic of conversation is a factor in the dialect used. Similarly Gumperz and Hernandez (1971) report that Mexican-Americans sometimes change

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*The study reported here was done by Cynthia S. Sutton, research assistant under the grant, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

languages in the middle of a sentence when there is a change of topic. Labov (1966) reports that the emotional level of the topic influences dialect use in that more standard language is used for less emotional topics.

The present experiment was designed to demonstrate the effects of audience and topic upon standardness of speech. Children were asked to listen to and then retell stories of two different kinds in order to manipulate topic. Audience was varied at the same time. The effect of another variable, sex of speaker was also measured in these situations.

Method

Subjects were 34 black children between the ages of 7 and 11. Half were male, half female. Most of them were members of the B.P. Learned Mission, an integrated recreational center, in New London, Connecticut, and all attended racially integrated public schools in New London.

Materials. Two types of stories were prepared. The academic stories were about scientific subject-matter, affectively neutral and moderately interesting. The exciting stories had a stronger emotional content, including aggression, and characters of the same age and racial characteristics as the subjects. Two stories of each type had been recorded on tape by a black child. All the stories were in Standard English, but were designed to contain as many 'target grammatical variables' as possible, that is, forms which would be different in Black English.

Procedure. Subjects were approached individually, told briefly about the task and promised a dime for each story they retold. Volunteers were divided into two groups and randomly assigned to one of two audience situations: 1) along with a white experimenter (white audience) or 2) in the company of another black child with a black experimenter (black audience). During the first round of testing they listened to one tape recording of each kind of story. After each tape, they were asked to tell the story back and encouraged to recall as much of it as possible. Their response was also recorded on tape. For the second round of testing the same children were solicited and each one who volunteered was tested again using the alternate stories and before the other kind of audience. All the testing was done in a play area familiar to the children. Both experimenters were also familiar, the white one somewhat more so. A total of 20 subjects participated in two sessions and thus told both kinds of stories to both kinds of audiences in roughly counterbalanced order.

Scoring. Written transcripts were made of the stories retold by each subject and records made of the scorable forms used. Items considered scorable were grammatical and phonological forms which differ in standard and black nonstandard English. The numbers of scorable forms varied considerably between subjects and stories. Table 16 lists the forms scored. Some of the nonstandard forms which were scored were ones that had alternates in the standard language of several of these children. Some items were scored as nonstandard which did not have standard alternates either because there is no

Table 16 (Part I)

Scoring System of Standardness of Speech

Nonstandard Grammar	Standard Grammar
Omission of third person singular present tense verb inflection	Use of third person singular present tense verb inflection
Omission of the copula (no use of "is" in full or contracted form)	Use of the copula ("is" or "s" where it could be omitted)
Omission of possessive "s"	Use of possessive "s"
Double or multiple negative	Standard negative (where double negative possible)
No use of "has" or "have" with "got" where possession or necessity is indicated	Use of "has" or "have" alone or with "got" where possession or necessity is indicated
He, she, or it+ "have"	He, she, or it+ "has" (as in preceding item)
He, she , or it+ "don't"	He, she, or it+ "doesn't"
They, you, or we+ "was"	They, you, or we+ "were"
Habitual or durative "be"	No score: Standard English has no equivalent
"Ain't"	Usual--no score
Inverted yes-no question	Standard yes-no question
Omission of "of" after "out" as in "out the house"	Usual--no score

Table 16 (Part I) continued

Nonstandard Grammar	Standard Grammar
Omission of "to" after "over" as in "over my house"	Usual--no score
Double noun, as in "my brother, he..."	Usual--no score

Table 16 (Part II)

Scoring System of Standardness of Speech

Nonstandard Phonology	Standard Phonology
d- (as in de, dis, dat, den)	th- (as in the, this, that)
"Wid", "wit," or "wif" (for with)	With (final -th)
"Axe" (for ask)	Ask (or assed in past tense)
"I'm a" (for I'm going to)	Usual--no score
Omission of -ed (only when clear)	Usual--no score
Omission of 're ("you gonna")	Usual--no score

standard alternate (e.g. the invariant "be") or because the standard alternate is so much more frequent for all subjects that counting it would obscure any overall differences (e.g. the standard equivalents of "ain't"). Results are reported as (approximate) proportions, the ratio of standard alternates in a child's speech to the total number of nonstandard plus scorable standard alternates he or she used. Grammatical and phonological items were scored separately.

Results

Table 17 shows that the stories retold to the white audience were significantly less standard than those told to the black audience when both grammatical and phonological items were considered but not for the two types of items separately. These results are in the opposite of the predicted direction.

Table 18 shows that the exciting stories were told in a significantly less standard dialect than the academic stories when both grammatical and phonological items were taken together, but not for each separately. This difference is in the predicted direction. Table 19 shows that the effect of the white audience was in the same direction for both types of stories, but was significant only for the academic ones.

Table 20 shows that the difference in dialect between the two types of stories is significant for both audiences. For the white audience the grammatical differences alone were also significant but for the black audience only the combined types of items are significantly different.

Table 21 shows that the girls were only a little and not

Table 17

Effect of Audience: Story Types Combined on Mean Proportion of Standard Forms

Linguistic Category	White Audience	Black Audience	t
Grammar N=18	.63	.73	1.75
Phonology N=19	.67	.75	1.75
Grammar & Phonology N=20	.66	.74	2.29*

*$p < .05$

Table 18

Effect of Story Type: Audiences Combined

on Mean Proportion of Standard Forms

Linguistic Category	Academic Stories	Exciting Stories	t
Grammar N=18	.70	.65	1.04
Phonology N=19	.75	.67	1.73
Grammar & Phonology N=20	.74	.66	3.08*

*$p < .01$

Table 1?

Effect of Audience on Two Types of Stories

Mean Proportion of Standard Forms

in Grammar and Phonology

Story Type	White Audience	Black Audience	t
Academic N=20	.69	.78	2.56*
Exciting N=21	.62	.69	1.56

*p<.02

Table 20

Effect of Story Type on Two Audiences

Mean Proportion of Standard Forms

in Grammar and Phonology

Audience	Academic Stories	Exciting Stories	t
White N=28	.67	.59	3.63*
Black N=26	.78	.66	2.90*

*$p < .01$

Table 21

Effect of Sex on Mean Proportion of Standard Forms

Linguistic Category	Females N=17	Males N=17
Grammar	.60	.54
Phonology	.70	.65
Grammar & Phonology	.68	.60

significantly more standard than the boys.

Discussion

The results of this study show that audience did indeed have a significant effect upon the dialect used, but that the direction of the effect was not correctly predicted on the basis of age and color of audience. Two observations suggest explanations for the more informal language used before a white experimenter. It was noted during the experiment that the presence of another child seemed to disturb the subjects who were performing rather than make them feel more at ease. Story retelling may have seemed to the children more like a test of ability than would the informal conversation of Labov's interviews, so that the presence of a peer had quite a different effect. In addition, the white experimenter was somewhat better known to the children than the black experimenter, so that they may have felt more at ease with her for this reason. The results suggest caution in using an overly objective definition of an informal situation.

The results confirmed the prediction that the topic of discourse, defined by the kind of story being retold, had the effect in that the more emotional stories were told in a more nonstandard language and the academic stories in more standard forms. This suggests that materials for practice in the use of Standard English should be of a kind that makes the language obviously appropriate.

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